

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 01629 141612Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-02 PRS-01 INR-07 /023 W
-----053447 142210Z /70

R 141431Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO USINFO WASHDC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9349

UNCLAS DUBLIN 1629

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN IRISH INDEPENDENT JULY 14,
1977 UNDER HEADING "THE DARK SHADOW"

IS THE SOVIET UNION INTERESTED IN PEACE ? RECENTLY IN
MOSCOW AT A SPECIAL MEETING ALL THE WESTERN DIPLOMATS WERE
TOLD BY THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT THAT
PEACE WAS THEIR DESIRE AND INTENTION. ONE MUST PLACE
ALONGSIDE THIS PROTESTATION THE HARD FACT THAT IN EUROPE, AT
THE MOMENT, SOVIET TANKS OUTNUMBER THOSE OF NATO BY FOUR TO ONE
AND THAT THEIR PRODUCTION OF TANKS FAR OUTSTRIPS THAT OF
THE U.S.

ADDING TO THE TENSION IS THE FACT THAT THE WEIGHT OF SOVIET
FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE IS NOW SUCH AS TO GIVE THE WESTERN
ALLIANCE AT THE MOST 48 HOURS ADVANCE NOTICE OF
HOSTILE SOVIET ACTION.

IT COULD BE ARGUED THAT THESE FORCES ARE NEEDED TO
KEEP A WATCH OVER EASTERN EUROPE TO ENSURE THAT THESE
NATIONS DO NOT STEP OUT OF LINE. AGAINST THAT MUST BE
PLACED THE FACT THAT SOVIET MILITARY EXERCISES HAVE
STRETCHED RIGHT UP TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF EAST BERLIN.

NATO IS NOW, BELATEDLY, TRYING TO RESTORE SOME OF
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THE BALANCE BY MEANS OF NEW ANTI-TANK WEAPONS AND A
MORE SENSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF ITS FORCES IN THE CENTRAL
SECTOR. THE U.S. WANTS EACH NATO COUNTRY TO STEP
UP BY THREE PER CENT EXPENDITURE ON MILITARY REQUIRE-
MENTS. SOME MAY NOT HEED THIS REQUEST. IN BRITAIN
AN ELEMENT WITHIN THE LABOUR PARTY IS BENT ON
REDUCING THE ARMED FORCES TO NEAR JOKE LEVEL. THAT

NOTION WILL NOT DO NATO MORALE ANY GOOD, AND WILL NOT
ENHANCE BRITAIN'S ALREADY LOW REPUTATION AS A
EUROPEAN NATION.

WE ARE NEUTRAL AND MR. O'KENNEDY, MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HAS ALREADY GONE TO SOME LENGTHS
TO DENY THAT WE HAVE ANY INTENTION OF JOINING NATO
OR OF PARTICIPATING IN ANY DISCUSSIONS THAT MIGHT
LEAD TO A MILITARY GESTURE TO THE WESTERN DEFENCES.
THAT IS ALL VERY RIGHT AND PROPER FOR THE MOMENT. WE
MUST, NEVERTHELESS, WONDER FOR HOW LONG CAN WE DRAW
FISCAL BENEFITS FROM THE E.E.C. AND CONTINUE TO AVOID
PROTECTING THE SOURCE OF THE MONETARY REWARDS.

A MEASURE OF BRITISH THINKING TOWARDS DEFENSE
SURFACES HERE FROM TIME TO TIME. IT HAS BEEN
MENTIONED THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE IS ONLY JUST ABOUT
IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR A PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY. ONE MUST
QUESTION THAT. WE CANNOT SPEND HUGE SUMS ON DEFENCE
WHEN WE STAND ALONE BUT WITH A DARK SITUATION EXISTING
IN EUROPE IT WOULD BE PERHAPS UNWISE TO ALLOW THE
DEFENCE FORCES TO DRIFT BACK TO THEIR PRE-1969
POSTURE.

WHILE WE STILL HAVE EASTERN EUROPEAN POLITICIANS WHO
TALK ABOUT PEACE WHEN THEY REALLY ARE TALKING
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ABOUT WAR, NEVER WAS IT MORE IMPORTANT THAT NATO
SHOULD NOT NEGLECT ITS FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE OF
DEFENDING WESTERN EUROPE TO SUCH A LIMIT AS TO
DETER ANY EVIL INTENTION FROM FORCES TO THE EAST
OF FEDERAL GERMANY. KRENE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY EQUIPMENT, MILITARY EXPENDITURES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 14-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DUBLIN01629
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770251-0655
Format: TEL
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770759/aaaabymb.tel
Line Count: 99
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ff27d76b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1865098
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EDITORIAL IN IRISH INDEPENDENT JULY 14, 1977 UNDER HEADING \"THE DARK SHADOW\" IS THE SOVIET UNION INTERESTED IN PEACE ? RECENTL
TAGS: SOPN, MMOL, MPOL, EI
To: USIA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ff27d76b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009